

IN THE CLAIMS

The claims of this application as they currently stand are reproduced below with appropriate status identifiers for the convenience of the Examiner:

1. (Withdrawn) A data distribution system, comprising:
 - a plurality of data sources each capable of transmitting a data item; and
 - a data vending machine capable of receiving the data item from said plurality of data sources and selling the received data item to a user; wherein said data vending machine includes
 - a data selecting apparatus operated by a user to select a desired data item,
 - a data source selecting apparatus connected to said data selecting apparatus, and selecting, among said plurality of data sources, that one holding the data item selected by said data selecting apparatus, in accordance with a specific standard,
 - a data receiving apparatus connected to said data source selecting apparatus and receiving said selected data item from the data source selected by said data source selecting apparatus, and
 - a data updating apparatus to which an external storage device is detachably mounted, for writing the data item received by said data receiving apparatus to said external storage device.
2. (Withdrawn) The data distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said data vending machine includes
 - a data information table connected to said data source selecting apparatus, storing information specifying a desired data item, a size of each data item, and information specifying a data source holding each data item, and
 - a data rate table connected to said data source selecting apparatus, storing rate of data transmission from said plurality of data sources to said data vending machine; andsaid data source selecting apparatus selects that data source by which time necessary for reception of the selected data item becomes the shortest, by making reference to said data information table and said data rate table.

3. (Withdrawn) The data distribution system according to claim 2, wherein
- said data information table further stores price information of each said data item;
 - said data vending machine further includes a clock specifying a present time;
 - said data updating apparatus has a function of storing in said external storing medium, information specifying time obtained by referring to said clock when a data item is written to said external storage medium and the price information of the data item;
 - said data vending machine further includes a charging apparatus for charging for the data item already recorded on said external storage medium to the user, based on the price information of the data item already recorded on said external storage medium at the time of writing the data to said external storage medium by said data updating apparatus, the time of writing of the last data item to said external storage medium recorded on said external storage medium, and on the time obtained by referring to said clock.
4. (Withdrawn) The data distribution system according to claim 2, wherein
- said data information table further stores price information of each said data item;
 - said data distribution system further comprising a data reproducing apparatus for reproducing a data item by mounting said external storage medium,
 - said data reproducing apparatus including means for recording information related to reproduction of said data item in said external storage medium every time said external storage medium is mounted and a data item is reproduced; wherein
 - said data vending machine further includes a charging apparatus charging for the data item already recorded on said external storage medium to the user, based on the price information of the data item already recorded on said external storage medium at the time of writing data to said external storage medium by said data updating apparatus, and on the information related to reproduction of said data item already recorded on said external storage medium, recorded on said external storage medium.

5. (Withdrawn) The data distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said data vending machine further includes a data buffering apparatus for temporarily storing a received data item, and
said data source selecting apparatus handles said data buffering apparatus as one of said plurality of data sources.
6. (Withdrawn) The data distribution system according to claim 1, wherein
each of said plurality of data sources repeatedly transmits data items;
said data vending machine further includes a transmission schedule table connected to
said data source selecting apparatus, storing a transmission schedule of data items
by said plurality of data sources; and
said data source selecting apparatus receives a data item by selecting a data source from
which said selected data item can be received at the earliest timing, among said
plurality of data sources, by making a reference to said transmission schedule
table.
7. (Withdrawn) The data distribution system according to claim 6, wherein said
plurality of data sources determine distribution of time allocated to transmission of each
data item in accordance with a predetermined standard.
8. (Withdrawn) The data distribution system according to claim 7, wherein said
plurality of data sources determine distribution of time allocated to transmission of each
data item, as a function of frequency of selection of each data item by said
selecting apparatus.

9. (Withdrawn) The data distribution system according to claim 8, wherein said plurality of data sources divide each data item to a plurality of blocks and transmits time-divisionally in accordance with said time distribution respectively, and said data receiving apparatus receives and integrates the plurality of blocks corresponding to said selected data item to restore said selected data item.
10. (Withdrawn) The data distribution system according to claim 6, wherein said plurality of data sources divide each data item into a plurality of blocks and transmits time-divisionally, and said data receiving apparatus receives and integrates the plurality of blocks corresponding to said selected data item to restore said selected data item.
11. (Withdrawn) The data distribution system according to claim 1, further comprising a vendor distributing non-electronic data, at least capable of receiving transmission of information from said data vending machine; wherein said data selecting apparatus is capable of selecting said vendor as one of the data sources and designating a non-electronic data desired by a user; and said data receiving apparatus has a function of transmitting information specifying said non-electronic data to the vendor selected by said data selecting apparatus, and transmitting information including specific contents of processing to be performed on said non-electronic data.

12. (Withdrawn) A data searching apparatus, comprising:

- a storage device storing a plurality of data items as a set of partial data items structured in a hierarchy of one or a plurality of levels;
- a search condition setting apparatus operated by a user to set a search condition desired by the user and desired level of said one or the plurality of levels from which retrieval is desired by the user;
- a searching apparatus searching said storage device in accordance with the search condition set by said search condition setting apparatus, and retrieving a partial data item matching said search condition on the level set by said user; and
- a writing apparatus to which an external storage device is detachably mounted, for writing said partial data item retrieved by said searching apparatus to said external storage device.

13. (Withdrawn) A copied data detecting system, comprising

- a data reproducing apparatus to which an external storage medium is mounted, for reproducing a data item recorded on said external storage medium; and
 - a data checking apparatus connected by communication to said data reproducing apparatus, for determining whether the external storage medium mounted on said data reproducing apparatus and of which reproduction is instructed has a data copied without authorization recorded thereon; wherein
- in a normal state of use, each said external storage medium has a unique authentication data allocated and recorded thereon, said authentication data being copied as it is to an external storage medium copied without authorization;
- said data reproducing apparatus includes a reproducing apparatus to which said external storage medium is mountable, for reproducing a data item recorded on said external storage medium in response to an instruction of reproduction,
 - a reproduction switch instructing reproduction of the data item to said reproducing apparatus, and

means responsive to an operation of said reproduction switch for transmitting the authentication data recorded on said external storage medium to said data checking apparatus; and
said data checking apparatus includes
a data management table recording the authentication data transmitted from said data reproduction apparatus for managing authentication data of the external storage medium which is being reproduced, and
determining means for determining, by determining whether the authentication data transmitted from said data reproducing apparatus already exists in said data management table or not, whether the external storage medium mounted on said data reproducing apparatus is an unauthorized copy or not.

14. (Withdrawn) The copied data detecting system according to claim 13, wherein
said data checking apparatus further includes means responsive to determination by said determining means that said external storage medium mounted on said data reproducing apparatus is an unauthorized copy, for transmitting a reproduction-prohibited signal to said data reproducing apparatus; and
said data reproducing apparatus further includes means responsive to said reproduction-prohibited signal for stopping reproduction of the data on said external storage medium by said reproducing apparatus.

15. (Withdrawn) The copied data detecting system according to claim 13, wherein
said data reproducing apparatus further includes an end switch used by a user for instructing end of data reproduction, and
means responsive to an operation of said end switch for transmitting the authentication data recorded on said external storage medium together with information indicating end of reproduction to said data checking apparatus; and
said data checking apparatus includes means responsive to said signal indicating end of reproduction for deleting the corresponding authentication data from said data management table.

16. (Withdrawn) A copied data detecting system comprising
- a data reproducing apparatus to which an external storage medium is mounted for reproducing a data item recorded on said external storage medium; and
 - a data checking apparatus connected by communication to said data reproducing apparatus for determining whether said external storage medium mounted on said data reproducing apparatus and of which reproduction is instructed has a data copied without authorization recorded thereon; wherein
- in a normal state of use, a unique authentication data is allocated to and recorded on each of said external storage medium, said authentication data being copied as it is to an external storage medium copied without authorization;
- said data reproducing apparatus includes
- a reproducing apparatus to which said external storage medium is mountable, for reproducing a data item recorded on said external storage medium in response to an instruction of reproduction,
 - a reproduction switch instructing reproduction of the data item to said reproducing apparatus, and
- transmitting means responsive to an operation of said reproduction switch for transmitting the authentication data recorded on said external storage medium to said data checking apparatus repeatedly in accordance with a prescribed transmission pattern; and
- said data checking apparatus includes
- a data management table recording the authentication data transmitted from said data reproducing apparatus and time of transmission, for managing the authentication data of the external storage medium which is being reproduced, and
- determining means responsive to the authentication data transmitted from said data reproducing apparatus, for determining, based on the record of said data management table and time of transmission of present authentication data, whether the external storage medium mounted on said data reproducing apparatus is an unauthorized copy.

17. (Withdrawn) The copied data detecting system according to claim 16, wherein
said transmission means starts repeated transmission of said authentication data to said
data checking apparatus after a prescribed time period in response to an operation
of said reproduction switch, and said prescribed time period is selected to be a
predetermined time period longer than a time interval of said repeated
transmission.

18. (Withdrawn) A copied data detecting system comprising:
a data vending machine allowing mounting of an external storage medium and selling
data to a holder of said external storage medium by writing a data item to said
external storage medium or updating a data item recorded on said external
storage medium; and
a data checking apparatus connected by communication to said data vending machine for
determining whether the external storage medium mounted on said data vending
machine has data copied without authorization recorded thereon; wherein
in a normal state of use, a unique authentication data is allotted to and recorded on each
of said external storage medium, said authentication data being copied as it is to
an external storage medium copied without authorization; and
said data vending machine includes
a data updating apparatus in which an external storage medium is detachably mountable,
for writing a data item designated by a user to said external storage medium,
data management table managing data by recording authentication data of an external
storage medium of which use is prohibited, and
means responsive to mounting of said external storage medium to said data updating
apparatus, for reading said authentication data of said external storage medium,
determining whether said authentication data corresponds to the prohibited use
by making a reference to said management table, and controlling an operation of
said data updating apparatus in accordance with the result of determination.

19. (Withdrawn) The copied data detecting system according to claim 18, wherein
said data vending machine further includes means responsive to the determination by said
control means that said authentication data is not for the data of which use is
prohibited, adding said authentication data to said data management table, and
updating authentication code of said external storage medium by generating a
new unique authentication code.
20. (Previously Presented) A data reproducing apparatus for reproducing digital data stored on
storage media, said digital data including reproducing apparatus specifying
information for specifying an apparatus capable of reproduction, comprising:
a housing containing:
- (i) a storage apparatus storing reproduction apparatus ID information unique to
said reproducing apparatus;
 - (ii) means for reading out said digital data from said storage media, wherein said
media includes a data region storing said reproducing apparatus
specifying information;
 - (iii) a first determining apparatus determining whether said reproducing
apparatus is capable of reproducing said digital data from said
reproduction apparatus ID information and said reproducing apparatus
specifying information;
 - (iv) a control apparatus enabling or disabling reproduction of said digital data by
said reproducing apparatus dependent on the result of determination by
said first determining apparatus; and
 - (v) a CPU directly controlling the manner of operation of said storage apparatus,
said first determining apparatus, and said control apparatus as well as the
reproduction of said digital data enabled by said control apparatus as
audio and/or video signals.

21. (Previously Presented) The data reproducing apparatus according to claim 20, wherein
said digital data includes display data to be reproduced visually; and
said reproducing apparatus comprises a display apparatus for visually reproducing and
displaying said digital data.
22. (Previously Presented) The data reproducing apparatus according to claim 20, further
comprising
an ID information input apparatus responsive to determination by said first determining
apparatus that said reproducing apparatus is not a reproducing apparatus capable
of reproducing said digital data, urging a user to enter a reproducing apparatus ID
information.
23. (Previously Presented) The data reproducing apparatus according to claim 22, further
comprising
a second determining apparatus determining whether the data reproducing apparatus
specified by the reproducing apparatus ID information input by said ID
information input apparatus is a reproducing apparatus capable of reproducing
said digital data; wherein
said control apparatus enables or disables reproduction of digital data by said reproducing
apparatus dependent on the result of determination by said second determining
apparatus.

24. (Previously Presented) The data reproducing apparatus according to claim 23, further comprising:

- an update selecting apparatus responsive to the determination by said second determining apparatus that the data reproducing apparatus specified by the reproducing apparatus ID information input by said ID information input apparatus is a reproduction apparatus capable of reproducing said digital data, allowing the user to select whether said reproducing apparatus specifying information is to be updated by said input reproducing apparatus ID information; and
- an updating apparatus responsive to the selection by said update selecting apparatus that said reproducing apparatus specifying information is to be updated by said input reproducing apparatus ID information, updating said reproducing apparatus specifying information by said input reproducing apparatus ID information.

25. (Previously Presented) A data reproducing apparatus for reproducing digital data stored on at least one external storage medium, said digital data including external storage medium specifying information for specifying an external storage medium comprising:

a housing; and

at least one external storage medium mounted on said housing, each of said at least one external storage medium storing external storage medium identification information unique to itself;

wherein said housing contains:

- (i) means for reading out said digital data stored on at least one of said at least one external storage medium, wherein said each of said at least one external storage medium includes a data region storing external storage medium specifying information;
- (ii) a first determining apparatus determining whether said external storage medium specifying information included in said digital data satisfies a prescribed relation with said external storage medium identification information;

- (iii) a control apparatus for enabling or disabling reproduction of the digital data by said reproducing apparatus dependent on the result of determination by said first determining apparatus; and
- (iv) a CPU directly controlling the manner of operation of said means for reading out said digital data stored on at least one of said at least one external storage medium, said first determining apparatus, and said control apparatus as well as the reproduction of said digital data enabled by said control apparatus as audio and/or video signals.

26. (Previously Presented) The data reproducing apparatus according to claim 25, wherein said digital data includes display data to be reproduced visually; and said reproducing apparatus comprising a display apparatus for visually reproducing and displaying said digital data.

27. (Previously Presented) The data reproducing apparatus according to claim 20, wherein said reproducing apparatus specifying information is recorded when reproduction is first performed by the data reproducing apparatus.

28. (Previously Presented) The data reproducing apparatus according to claim 20, wherein said reproducing apparatus specifying information is recorded when digital data is sold.

29. (Withdrawn) A display apparatus reproducing and displaying digital data including reproducing apparatus specifying information specifying an apparatus capable of reproduction and copy permission information, comprising:
- copy permission determining means for reading said copy permission information and for determining whether copying of said digital data is permitted or not; ID information determining means for determining whether the display apparatus is capable of reproducing said digital data from display apparatus ID information unique to said display apparatus and said reproducing apparatus specifying information; and
 - display control means for controlling display and non-display of said digital data dependent on the result of determination by said copy permission determining means and said ID information determining means.
30. (Withdrawn) The display apparatus according to claim 29, wherein
- said display control means controls the display such that the digital data is displayed regardless of the result of determination by said ID information determining means, when it is determined by said copy permission determining means that copying of said digital data is permitted.